

The Sankofa Experience Executive Summary

One in five transgender people in the United States is discriminated against when seeking a place to call home. More than one in ten trans-identified people have experienced unjust eviction, due to their gender identity. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has issued guidance stating that "discrimination against transgender renters or homebuyers based on gender identity or gender stereotypes constitutes sex discrimination and is prohibited, under the Fair Housing Act (FHA)."

Another legitimate concern around housing for transgender people is non-enforcement of Human Rights legislation. Human Rights laws help to secure "the peace, deter aggression, promote the rule of law, combat crime and corruption, strengthen democracies, and prevent humanitarian crises"(Source: USDOS). The District of Columbia has some of the most comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in the country.

However, according to The DC Trans Needs Assessment Survey, and a 2011 national study of transgender discrimination, found that 19% of their respondents were denied a home or an apartment. 11% of transgender individuals were evicted because they were transgender or gender non-conforming. Furthermore, the study found that 19% became homeless at some point because they were transgender or gender non-conforming. Out of the transgender or gender non-conforming individuals who attempted to access homeless shelters in DC;

- 29% were turned away altogether,
- while 42% were forced to stay in facilities designated for the wrong gender,
- 55% reported harassment,
- 25% physically assaulted and,
- 22% have been sexually assaulted while in shelters.

Undoubtedly, housing hardships and discrimination have a profound impact on Trans-communities in the Washington, DC region and across the nation. Consequently, stronger explicit legal protections from gender identity discrimination and enforcement of laws and legislation are still needed.

Also, employment is the most significant obstacle to overcome for some Tran's people. With stable housing comes the need for a steady job or income based supplements to support community living. It is estimated, 15% of transgender individuals reported salaries of 10,000 dollars or lower.

As we push forward in the movement to mitigate safe, fair and equitable housing for transgender residents in the District of Columbia, we find housing instability remains a prominent issue with transgender residents in the District, who still have difficulty with finding different places to sleep for periods of time and continuously facing eviction. Included in this proposal are my methods for changing the current climate of housing availability to transgender residents in the District of Columbia. In this proposal, I intend to highlight The Sankofa Experience innovative approach to integrated services that would provide a wrap-around continuum of care of programs and services model to homeless transgender residents in Washington, DC.